

CALL TO ORDER

The one hundred forty-first meeting of the Water and Wastewater Operator's Advisory Council was called to order at 1:00 p.m. by Carol Reifschneider, Ph.D., MSU-Northern, Council Chairperson. Other Council members present included: Joanne "Joni" Hall Emrick, Kalispell; Steve Ruhd, Conrad; Roger Skogen, Valier; Tony Porrazzo, Polson; Grant Burroughs, Big Sky; and Jon Dilliard, DEQ Public Water and Subdivision Bureau Chief.

Department personnel attending all or portions of the meeting were Jenny Chambers, Certification Officer; and Reta Therriault, License Permit Technician.

MINUTES APPROVED

The minutes from the previously held meeting on May 26, 2005 were unanimously approved following a motion by Steve Ruhd and a second by Joni Emrick.

WELCOME NEWEST
COUNCIL MEMBER

Jenny Chambers, on behalf of everyone, welcomed Grant Burroughs to the Advisory Council Board. Grant was appointed by the Governor to replace Roger Thomas.

ELECTION OF CHAIR
AND VICE CHAIR

Jenny Chambers said that it was time to elect a new chairperson. Section 37-42-302, Montana Codes Annotated (MCA), provides that: "Annually, when new members are appointed to the council, a chairman shall be elected at the next council meeting." Steve Ruhd nominated Joni as the new chairperson. Carol Reifschneider seconded the motion, followed by a motion from Steve to close the nominations. Roger Skogen seconded the motion. The motion was unanimous. Acting as the new chairperson, Joni Emrick opened up the floor for nominations for the vice chairperson. Steve Ruhd nominated Tony Porrazzo and Roger Skogen seconded and moved to close. The motion was unanimous. Joni congratulated Tony on being nominated the as vice chairperson.

PWSB "Business Process
Management" (BPM)
UPDATE

Jon Dilliard provided the Council members an update on the Business Process Management analysis completed within the Bureau. Phase I of the process took the water, subdivisions and operator certification programs and modified them into different sections. The Bureau now has public water compliance, plan review, technical services, and subdivision sections. Steve Kilbreath is the new Subdivisions Section Supervisor. The Kalispell and Billings offices are considered their own sections. The Technical Services Section is managed by Jenny Chambers and includes all fiscal, program, and administrative support and the Operator Certification Program. The Phase I transition started the first part of August. Currently, the Bureau is starting Phase II of the process. This phase will look at all of the processes and one

in particular, the Total Coliform Rule program. The Council requested a copy of the new telephone list and during the next meeting will be provided with a copy.

WATER SCHOOL AND EXAM REPORTS

Reta provided the Council with a recap of the Summer School exams that were given in Missoula on June 17. Of the seven people that took 7 exams, 3 became fully certified, 1 an operator-in-training and 3 failed, which was a 57.14% pass rate and 42.86% fail rate. There were 11 office exams given June – September 2005. Of the office exams 8 became fully certified and 3 failed, which was a 72.73% pass rate. Reta said that 61 people had signed up to take an exam on October 7. Jenny reported that approximately 180 people registered for the 72nd Annual Fall Water School on Monday, October 3. She also said that Greg Butts and Mike Kropp did a good job on the classes they were teaching and that exam prep was going well.

Jenny told the Council that DEQ staff met and went over all of the questions on the water exams, one last time. A list of questions was sent back to the Association of Boards of Certification and replacement questions were requested. When the replacement questions are received, staff will review and select the replacement questions for version #1 of all levels of water examinations. At the same time version #2 will be requested. Exam versions #1 and #2 are alternated when given to people taking the same exam more than once.

REIMBURSEMENT PROGRAM UPDATE

Jenny told the Council that there was approximately 1 million dollars left in the Reimbursement Program. At the last Council meeting Jenny passed along information she received from the Montana Water Center. She told the Council that after listening to their concerns and also discussing the proposal with the Continuing Education Credit Review Committee (CECRC), she decided not to pursue the CD any further. Joni said there should be a vote on pursuing the CD. Carol Reifschneider made a motion to deny the CD and Steve Ruhd seconded the motion. The motion was unanimous. The CECRC felt there were better ways to spend the money. It was suggested to use some of the money for on the job training and internships. Members of the CECRC stated that Mississippi may have a similar internship program and Jenny is going to research it. Jenny will incorporate all of the ideas and has asked the Council to continue brainstorming.

According to a recent article in “On Tap”, they are estimating the workforce for water and wastewater operators will significantly

change in the next 5-10 years. Jenny provided everyone with a chart of the age breakdown of the current operators in Montana. The chart indicates that more half of the certified operators are over 50 years of age, which means that retirement is right around the corner for many of them. Jon Dilliard pointed out that that in the past, if a program was honestly trying to use the grant money, they were allowed to keep it. But now if the grant money is not used, you loose it. Tony Porrazzo backed the suggestion of developing a program to offer training money for small systems and then offer the trained person a job. Steve Ruhd didn't think it would work because the job wouldn't pay enough. Jon pointed out that Hill County had a retired operator come in and train someone to become the certified operator for that system. Other suggestions to use the money included: Steve suggested having a back flow prevention class in the winter or possibly more than once a year. Tony said that the speaker from back East was awesome and the information he provided was invaluable. Joni suggested buying equipment because it is so expensive. Reta suggested paying for half of the equipment and Roger suggested paying for the sampling that needs to be done for the small systems. Jenny will modify the workplan and how the money is going to be spent and then will provide it to the Advisory Council via e-mail for review.

RENEWAL UPDATE

The Council with a copy of the 2005-2006 Renewal Statistics, as of August 25, 2005. It was noted that 220 suspension letters were mailed out on July 6, 2005. Grant Burroughs asked if suspension letters meant that operators didn't pay the renewal fee. Jenny explained that suspension letters could mean that the operator did not pay the renewal fee, did not get the correct amount of continuing education credits, or both. During the 2005-2006-renewal year, operators were not required to fulfill the continuing education requirement so all operators that were suspended failed to pay the renewal fee by the June 30 deadline. The suspended operators are provided 30-days to pay renewal fee and a \$30.00 late fee to avoid being revoked. On August 8, Ashley mailed out 99 revocation notices. Operators are given 10 days to pay the renewal fees and late fees. Out of 99 people that received the revocation notices 62 people had their certificates revoked on August 22. In order to be certified again they will have to reapply and retake the examination.

UPDATE ON METC MOVE TO HAVRE

Jenny told Grant Burroughs that the Montana Environmental Training Center (METC), which was located in Great Falls has moved to Havre and has settled in their new office at MSU-Northern. She said that METC co-sponsors training and is fee

based. They used to have 2 full time employees (FTE) and 1 part time employee. METC will now operate with 1 FTE and 1 part time person. Due to the similarities in job descriptions, Gary Hall was offered the full time position and he accepted. Gary starts on Monday October 10, 2005. Jenny stated that she and Bill Bahr would go to Havre the end of October or the first part of November for a meeting to discuss what DEQ expects from METC. Carol Reifschneider noted that part of the full time position is to come up with training for the operators.

COMPLIANCE STATUS ACTIVITY REPORT

Reta told the Council that the compliance percentage is still in the high 90's. There are 11 Community, 6 Non-Transient Non-Community and 9 Wastewater (WW) Systems on the compliance list at this time. Out of these 26 systems 5 systems have been turned over to Enforcement – 3 Community and 2 WW. Jenny said that one of the Wastewater systems in Enforcement is going to the Board of Review and that she and Reta will have to testify as to the types of violations and the dates of violations of the Operator Certification Laws, Montana Public Water Supply laws and Administrative Rules of Montana. Jon Dilliard said that the owner of the wastewater system was appealing just the penalty amount because he does not want to pay the fine.

Jenny noted that during the round table discussion with the Advisory Council, Terry McLaughlin from Smurfit Stone in Missoula brought up the fact that there is no Industrial Wastewater training offered at the schools. He also noted that Industrial Wastewater does not have a representative on the Advisory Council. Jenny explained that there is only one Industrial Wastewater (Class D) exam offered and that it is petroleum based exam for the ExxonMobil refinery in Billings. All other industrial wastewater examinees are given the regular (Class C) wastewater exam. The certifications will acknowledge the industrial certification but will say that a Class C exam was given. As far as representation on the Advisory Council, two of the seven members could be from either a municipal wastewater facility or an industrial wastewater facility the definition does not limit the type of wastewater certification they must hold, just the level.

PROGRESS ON CERTIFICATION OF WASTEWATER COLLECTION SYSTEMS

Jenny provided the Council with a breakdown of the Wastewater Systems according to population. Tony thought there should be a split on the small systems. Jenny explained that she was thinking about making the split **10,000 or 3,300 and above**. The program would have two examinations – one for large systems and one for small systems. The larger systems would be mandatory and the smaller systems would be on a voluntary basis. Joni reiterated that

there would be 2 systems – large and small. Tony thought that there might be a lot of complaints and Steve Ruhd wanted to know if the systems could be grandfathered. Reta said that grandfathering is no longer allowed and Jenny said that the systems would have to take the new collection system exam in order to become certified. Roger Skogen said that he has been talking to some of the operators and that the operators think this should be mandatory. Jon Dilliard said that the executive planning process has already started. It will have to go through administrative review and the Governor's Office. Jenny thought we could keep the fee base the same. A question was discussed on which type of wastewater system would be required or eligible to become collection system certified. Jenny suggested that all wastewater systems that currently and in the future have a Montana Discharge Elimination System Permit. Jon stated that wastewater systems that spray irrigate also need to have discharge permits, but we may not require them to have a certified collection system operator. Jon also noted that before taking this to the Legislature, support was needed from the operators. Jenny agreed and stated that she recently discussed at the Montana League of Cities and Towns Annual Conference and at the 72nd Fall Water School. She also mentioned that she is on the agenda for the Montana Rural Water Conference in February and will mention this proposal then. Tony Porrazzo made a motion for Jenny Chambers to continue with this process. Roger Skogen seconded and all approved.

DATE OF NEXT
MEETING

Joni called for dates for the next meeting. Jenny suggested the end of April. The next Council meeting will be April 27, 2006.

ADJOURNMENT

Joni called for a motion to adjourn. Steve Ruhd made a motion to adjourn and Carol Reifschneider seconded. The motion was unanimous.